1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

INTRODUCTION

packed clearing amid a grove of trees. Myers is slightly stooped from rheumatism and wears two brass wires around his ankles to help relieve the pain in his legs. His African-born grandmother, Bina, "tell me how she get heah on a big boat an she lan down theah on Cumberland Ilun on a big dock." He tells the visitors how the slaveholders "broke" newly enslaved Africans by confining them in a log house, chaining them to iron rings in the floor:

> They chained them wile Africans theah till they wuz tame. They'd take em out one by one and they'd give em a stick an put em in the fiel with people wut knowd how tuh wuk an that way they lun how too. They sked to give em a hoe. It's shahp and they might frail roun with it.

Look at his picture. A big, barefoot, very black man with a fringe of white beard, Jim Myers is a living link between Georgia and Africa.

FROM THEIR ENCOUNTERS with Katie Brown, Tony William Delegal, Henry Williams, and Jim Myers—and with 134 other people like them in twenty locations over a three-year period—the fieldworkers of the Savannah Unit of the Federal Writers Project fashioned a series of haunting portraits in words and pictures of coastal black Georgians. Their book, *Drums and Shadows*, is aimed at a general audience. It is organized by community and is presented in a straightforward narrative spiced with long quotations in a readable literary adaptation of the black Georgians' speech. It is filled with rich examples of Afro-American folklore.

Drums and Shadows presents much information on folk speech and naming patterns, including the use of day names and the folk etymology of Gullah. Here are examples of numerous African words used in coastal Georgia. Here is *deloe*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

115 Refinery; he also cobbles shoes and repairs anything from broken pots to roller skates. Because of his skill as a wood (322) carver, particularly of walking sticks, he has become known in the vicinity as "Stick Daddy." A decidedly original technique is evident in his carving, but he smiled when this was mentioned.

322 "I nevuh bin taught," he said. "I took up cahvin as paht time jis fuh the fun of it. Muh granfathuh, Pharo Cooper, he used tuh make things frum wood an straw, sech as baskets an cheahs an tables an othuh things fuh the home. I guess I sawt of inherited it frum him."

322 532 One of "Stick Daddy's" canes is a slender, snake-encircled rod with a handle made from a large black and white die. Another, slightly thicker, is carved with a single crocodile. The third, a heavy stick topped with a flashlight handle in which the snapshot of a young Negro girl has been inserted, is artfully decorated with a turtle, a large crocodile, and a small, sinuous snake (Plate IIIb).[A] The chief characteristic of "Stick Daddy's" work is the boldness with which the carved figures, dark-stained and highly polished, stand out against their unfinished natural wood background. Very different is another stick that was found abandoned in an office building in the city. This has a man's head for a handle but the stick proper is so covered with minute, unpatterned crisscrosses that the little figure of a man upside down, a horned head also upside down, and an undetermined object which may be either man or animal, are noticed only when the cane is carefully studied.

•757 "Stick Daddy," besides being a general repair man and carver, knows a few "sho cuos" for illnesses.

"I kin make a sho cuo fuh chills an fevuh. Yuh take some cawn fodduh an boil it an make a tea. Yuh drink some an bathe in some an yuh'll git well soon. Fuh a cold yuh git some life-evuh-lastin and make a tea tuh drink, aw git some Jack-O."

A. [See Category 322, plate following p. xxxii-C+-Analyst]

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

We asked about roots.

"I dohn believe in them things," asserted "Stick Daddy." "I dohn believe in nuthin like that. It's too dangerous. But I do believe in some signs. Yuh watch em and yuh'll see that they dohn nevuh fail. If somebody borruh salt frum yuh, 'tis not wise tuh accept it back; 'twill cause trouble. If yuh throw out stove an chimney cleanin aftuh sundown, 'tis sho death."

Fred Jones,* a tall Negro of nearly eighty, with brown complexion and piercing eyes, sternly forbade us to discuss conjure.

"Dohn yuh know," fearfully, "dat yuh might bring trouble on yuhsef? Das ting ain nobody ought tuh mess wid."

"How do you know that?"

"Ain no mattuh how come I knows. I seen it. I seen pusson wid duh powuh tuh tun hesef intuh any shape he got a mine tuh.[68] Dey kin cause yuh plenty trouble an duh only ting kin sabe yuh is tuh git tuh a root man on time." [6, 48]

Our surprise and interest drew him in spite of his fears to speak in a low voice of several instances where he had seen conjure working.

"Deah wuz a man wid duh powuh.[48] He draw a ring roun anudduh man an dat man couldn git out dat ring till duh root man come an wave tuh um. Den deah wuz a uhmun done up so bad by somebody dat ants wuz crawlin out tru uh skin.[56] Wenebuh a pusson go crazy, wut is dat but cunjuh? [18]

"I dohn lak tuh talk bout muhsef, but I caahn nebuh fuhgit duh time I hab a dose put on me by a uhmun uh didn lak. I wuz a good frien ub uh huzbun an she didn lak fuh us tuh go out tuhgedduh; so she tole me not tuh come tuh uh house no mo. I ain pay no tention. Well, suh, duh nex night soon as uh laid down, uh feel muhsef swoon. Ebry night it happen. Dis ting keep up till uh git sick. I couldn eat an jis

* Fred Jones, 607 West Congress Street.

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

115 789 472 "*Mystic Mojo Incense* is anudduh one uh muh bes selluhs. On duh box it says dis is duh same incense used by duh Hindus an Arabs an Tuks, an also duh Egyptians, an Chinese. In every box is five diffunt culluhs, each one fuh a diffunt puhpose." From a box which Mattie had on hand we took down the directions: "Work the magic spell now. Just hold *Mystic Mojo* in hand and light match to tip. Perfumed with rare fragrance and exotic sandalwood, myrrh and incense. Price 25¢. Sweet and strong."

Mattie also constantly reorders a product known as *Magnetic Lodestone in Holy Oil*. "Dis is used," she explained "tuh drive away evil spirits an bad luck an tuh bring yuh luck in love, an business, an gamblin games. Den deah's *Five Finguh Grass*. A lot uh duh people heah are sked of witches an spirits visitin em at night. Dey hang *Five Finguh Grass* ovuh deah bed aw doeway tuh protec duh whole house.[11] Some of em use *Black Cat Incense an Powduh*."

115 759 [463] A few blocks from Mattie Sampson lives William Edwards • who follows the diverse trades of root doctor,[48] piano tuner, and watchman at a filling station. For a while the old man stubbornly insisted that, although he had been a popular root doctor in his younger days, he had not treated a patient in years. After a good deal of casual friendly conversation, he at length admitted that he was at present doctoring a man who had malaria. He also admitted that he was treating a cousin for an ailment and said that by the use of roots he had recently cured another patient of kidney trouble.

• [757]

757 [231] "Muh roots kin cuo mos any pains," he said earnestly. "I wuks on dogs too. I kin cuo a mad dog in lessn a day ef dey git tuh me in time. I make muh medicine frum King Physics. It grows on duh salts an is bery plentiful neah Montgomery, but yuh hab tuh know how tuh fine it.

752 825 "Duh spiduh is bote good and ebil an is useful tuh man.

• *William Edwards, corner West Broad and 32nd Streets.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

BROWNVILLE

757 825 I make a medicine out uh duh spiduh[5] by stooin eel skin in lahd wid it. Wen dis is done, I hab a saave dat will stop any kine uh pain. On duh iluns, specially St. Catherine, duh spiduh is hel in high regahd by some uh duh people.[52]

757 "I make muh medicine out uh King Physic root, an Indian Ash, an Tukish Wine. Wen I wuz a boy I lun many tings frum duh ole people bout herbs dat wuz good fuh diffunt ailments. Deah wuzn so many doctuhs in dem days. We hab tuh fine remedies fuh our sickness an know how tuh cuo snake bite aw cuts an boils, eben female complaints. So I lun wut herbs tuh use fuh deze ailments too.

[752] "I kin cuo any rattlesnake bite in twenty-fo hours. Duh remedy is King Physic, tuhpentine, an wiskey. Attuh duh pizen is kill, gib em plenty sweet milk an ebryting will be all right in twenty-fo hours.

[237] [825] "Duh spiduh web is good fuh stoppin duh blood wen anybody git cut. I make a saave by stooin physic vine leaves an talluh an spiduh tuhgedduh. Dis saave will relieve any bruise aw ole so. It draw all duh pizen out uh duh so.[48a, b]

775 789 "Tuh keep ghos away, missus, yuh hab tuh go in duh woods an fine a tree dat wuz strik by lightin, an git some uh duh bahk an put some unduh duh doe step an carry a piece in yuh pocket. No ghos would ebuh bodduh yuh agen. I done dat an ain been bodduh since. Now all yuh hab tuh do tuh keep witches frum ridin yuh is keep a Bible unduh yuh pilluh at night."[13]

759 759 [115] [278] Another root doctor * in the section told us that he had been born with a special knowledge of healing and had studied the science of herbs from the time he was a small boy.[48] Some of the herbs he uses in his mixtures are Golden Seal, Yellow Dust, Golden Thread, Hippo Root, Pink Root, Lady Slipper, Yellow Root, Blood Root, Rattlesnake Master, Black Snake Root, and John the Conqueror.

[787] "I know in a dream," he said, "jis wen a patient is comin

* *George W. Little, 737 West 34th Street.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

759
•757
787 to consult me an I know head uh time zackly wut kine uh herbs tuh gadduh in awduh tuh cuo im."

He had been born with this power to foretell the future,
787 he asserted.[22a,*] "Outside uh dreams," he went on, "I kin use leaves an coffee grouns an a suttn kine uh seed known as duh sensitive aw jumpin seed. Yuh fine deze seeds at suttn times long duh sho uh duh Wes Indies. Yuh hab tuh keep duh seeds in a closed containuh aw dey will jis disappeah. Tuh tell fawchuns yuh spread duh seeds out fo yuh on duh groun an dey'll moob bout. Dey moob cawdn tuh wut yuh tinkin. Tellin fawchuns is jis a mattuh uh concentratin yuh imagination on suttn tings. Den ebryting will appeah fo yuh."[22b-d]

754 Conjure is being practiced all the time, the root doctor informed us. "Frawgs an lizuds an sech tings is injected intuh people's bodies an duh people den fall ill an sometime die.[5, 15] Udduh strange tings is happenin, too. Take duh
789 story uh dem people wut fly back tuh Africa. Das all true. Yuh jis hab tuh possess magic knowledge tuh be able tuh cumplish dis.[69a] Not long ago I see a man vanish intuh tin eah by snappin his finguhs. Hab yuh heahd uh duh man wut wuz put in prison in Springfield? He jis flied away frum duh jail an wuz nebuh caught agen.[66b, 69a] Yes, ma'am, I know wut yuh hab tuh hab in awduh tuh fly aw vanish away, but it is mighty hahd tuh git. It's duh bone ub a black cat."

(115) A woman* informant, too, had heard about flying Africans and persons who could disappear at will.[69a] She said also that she had often been ridden by witches. "Dey seem tuh come frum noweah an staht chokin yuh.[69] Witches an root men hab duh same magic powuh."

764 Relative to the custom of placing food and possessions on a new grave this woman spoke earnestly. "Dis wuz a common ting wen I wuz young. Dey use tuh put duh tings a
(775) pusson use las on duh grabe.[47] Dis wuz suppose tuh satisfy

* *Florence Postell, 928 West 51st Street.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

754 come ebry night lak a rabbit an rode a woman. A man wut knowd duh woman laid a trap fuh duh witch. Duh witch scape frum duh house, but duh dogs track uh down. Wen she see she wuz caught, she beg duh man not tuh do nuttn tuh uh an she wouldn nebuh do no mo witchin."

775 787 (115) A Negro preacher* in a near by section said that he had been in the habit of seeing ghosts all his life.[58, 59] "Once wuz jis aftuh muh fathuh died. I saw him all dressed up an weahin a Stetson hat. I called muh mothuh an said, 'Mothuh, heah come Papa.' Wen I tun roun, he wuz gone.

"Aftuh I marry I moob out by duh watuh wuks. A frien uh mine name Arthur Perry die. Some time latuh anothuh frien die. One night I wuz lyin down wen I heah a noise. I look up an deah wuz two men all dressed up in wite, walkin cross dat room. As I watch em dey begin tuh shrink till dey wuzn no bigguhn dawls. Den dey disappeah. I see ghos mos any time, so Ise used to it now."

754 775 That he was frequently visited by both witches and ghosts was the assertion of another man.** "Duh witches come in an strangle me,"[59] he said, "but duh ghos yuh jis see, an no hahm come frum um. Jis las night attuh I gone tuh bed a ghos come in muh house.[59] I hab tuh git up an run im out. Sometime dey pull duh cubbuh right off muh bed."

754 The same man said considerable conjuring was being practiced in the neighborhood, but that he kept a careful distance from people who were believed to be able to "do tings tuh yuh."[15]

"Yuh see," he volunteered, "I hab muh leg fix once. Dat wuz back in 1893. Fus muh foot swell up, den muh leg. It wuz so bad I couldn walk. A man tole me tuh go tuh Doctuh Buzzud, a root doctuh.[48] Doctuh Buzzud gimme some root medicine an in no time I wuz all right."[6]

(757)

* *Harry Higgins, 1810 West Broad Street.*
** *Albert Jenkins, 627 West 36th Street.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

I caahn see um but uh feels um. Sometime wen folks is comin tuh me I kin tell dey comin fo I see um, an wen yuh die yuh head tun backwud.[57] Soon's yuh die it tun roun.

"Duh folks frum Africa could see um. Dey natchul bawn dat way. An wite dogs![46] Dey alluz kin see spirit. Muh brudduh Simon he bawn wid a caul an he see um an play wid um.[4] Dey would climb trees an he climb attuh um so muh mudduh give um some tea made frum caul uh women an bline um tuh um."

We endeavored to gain some information as to the ingredients of this tea but the only explanation was that the concoction was more effective when made from cauls of women.

He could remember nothing as to the use of drums at funerals or other gatherings but his eyes twinkled when we turned the conversation to a culinary line.

"Ma would make ash cake," he recalled. "She would mix duh cawnmeal, den open duh oak ashes an spread in some hickory leaves, den put duh cawnmeal on duh leabes an cubbuh wid mo leabes, den put duh hot ashes an coals on duh top. Wen it done, she take duh bread frum duh ashes an rub it wid a rough clawt aw brush an it would be pretty an brown. Dis," he concluded smacking his lips, "wuz bery fine wid fat meat aw surup."

Justine Singleton * believed firmly in the existence of spirits as verified by her statement. "Yes, wen I wuz sick muh sistuh das dead come tuh me an I knowd dat it wuz huh an she done talk tuh me. She tole me tuh git some weepin willuh an bile it an make a wash fuh muh feet." This, she explained is an excellent remedy for foot ailments. "I done talk tuh duh spirits many times. Sometime I gib em sumpm. I caahn tell yuh no mo now cuz I caahn git muh mine tuhgedduh."

In this locality stands a small one-room structure occu-

* *Justine Singleton, Tatemville.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

from her description seemed to have been a small scar, oval in shape and slightly raised.

We had been told by her neighbors that she, too, bore a mark, although none of them had seen it.

"Did he mark you too, Rosanna?"

She gave us a piercing look, ignored the question, and continued along another vein. "He eat funny kine uh food. Roas wile locus an mushruhm an tanyan root. It lak elephant-eah an tase like Irish potatuh. He plant mosly benne an rice. I plant a lill benne ebry yeah too. He use tuh beat benne seed in mawtuh an pestle, sometime wid a lill shuguh an sometime wid a lill salt an make a pase. He eat it on bread aw he eat it jis so."

We broached the subject of drums.

"Yes'm, dey use tuh dance tuh drums an dey beat um fuh fewnuls too.

"I wuz too lill tuh membuh anyting wut wuz said bout muh granpa, but muh pa wuk on duh fahm fuh is 'boss.' He make lot uh duh tings dey use. I ain got nuttn wut he had but dis." She brought forth a curious looking tool resembling a can opener with a hook in the end, which, she said, her father had used for extracting teeth. He had also been familiar with various roots and weeds, which he used in the preparation of medicines administered to the sick on the plantation.[45]

We returned to the subject of the mark, at the mention of which her eyes suddenly narrowed.

"Wut yuh doin? Is yuh gonuh sen me back tuh Liberia?"

When we assured her that we had no such intention she became complacent and even voluble.

"Yes'm, he mahk me," she admitted, "on muh ches."

"What did he do it with? What sort of an instrument did he use?" we asked, vainly trying to conceal our interest.

"I dohn membuh. I wuz too lill."

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

hundred, are deeply religious and lay great stress on being "Christian people." Many of the older inhabitants were formerly slaves on a large plantation on St. Catherines Island. After the War between the States many of these Negroes moved to White Bluff, built their homes, reared their families, and have lived to see two generations reach maturity. With all their fervent Christian doctrines the old people have an unwavering faith in many of the beliefs taught them by their grandparents. A few remember their ancestors who were brought from Africa on slave ships.

The younger group seem carefree as they perform their tasks in the cool part of the morning. It is not unusual to see several young men lying on a shady porch resting or happily engaged in a card game as early as ten o'clock on a summer morning. These young people have little faith in the practices of their elders, but they believe profoundly in the power of certain charms to affect luck and love.[8]

Having heard that Sophie Davis was one of the oldest persons in the community, we visited her and found her cordial in her reception. Sophie * does not know her exact age, but was eight at the time of the war. She is very short and very stout with gray hair and a very large smiling face. The day we saw her she wore a cotton print dress with gray predominating. Her sparkling eyes expressed her interest in current happenings of the community, and when she laughed, her eyes became mere slits and her shoulders shook.

Indicating a small bush growing beside the doorway of her little cabin, Sophie told us, "Some uh duh folks heah sho belieb in some queah tings. Yuh see dis lill bush—it call Cherokee an mos uh duh folks yuh plants it at duh doe. It bring um good luck.[34c] Lot uh medicine an cuos is made frum udduh roots and herbs an some uh duh folks uses um wen dey's sick." [48]

We inquired as to the kind of herbs used.

* *Sophie Davis, White Bluff.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

757 824 "Duh wite root," pointing to a wild shrub, "dey use fuh stomach troubles. Buttuh root an palmettuh root an May apple, yuh bile tuhgedduh wid a quawt uh watuh till it simmuh down tuh haf uh pint, den yuh add some cawn wisky. Dat a fambly tonic tuh buil yuh up."

777 [784] Sophie went on to tell us something about the beliefs prevailing in the neighborhood. "Ef some relative is sick, yuh dohn nebuh deah tuh sew on a gahment wut yuh is weahin cuz dat put a spell on duh sick un an dey mos liable tuh die.[49] Deah's anudduh ting too. Yuh sho bettuh not steal tings frum a grabe.[64] I sho know I wouldn. Deah's jis a lot uh udduh tings bout bad luck too. One sho sign is dat ef a pusson sneeze wile dey's eatin long, dat is, dey hab food in dey mout, den dey got tuh put it out lessn dey hab bad luck.[52] Anudduh sign is duh hootin ub a owl."[44]

[827] [825] 754 A strange look of doubt and amusement came into Sophie's eyes at the mention of conjuring. She smiled and slowly shook her head.

"I heahd ub a few cases weah dey say one uh duh neighbuhs cunjuh anudduh,[15] but fuh duh mos paht dey all gits long all right. Das cuz we's all Christians an dohn put no faith much in dem kine uh tings. Dey say dat a powuhful chahm kin be made frum grabeyahd dut[9] fuh cunjuhin puhposes, but duh pusson dat git duh dut mus put some pennies on duh grabe, else he hab trouble hissef. Nebuh let a enemy git any ub yuh haiah wut bin cut off aw yuh nail clippins. Ef he git deze he kin make sumpm dat will cause lot uh trouble.[10] I kin tell yuh sumpm else bout duh haiah too. Ef a bud gits duh haiah, yuh'll hab a headache soon.

[826] [825] 754 759 "Now Uncle John Bowen on St. Catherines he wuz a root man an one time a man come tuh him tuh git somebody fix. Uncle John he wuz fixin tings tuh linguh um, an duh man sit on duh cheah weah he hab duh cunjuh tings an Uncle John he git so mad he git right up an fix duh cunjuh right now so dat man wut awduh duh fixin die hesef. He fix lot

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

159 they give the audience an opportunity to become an active participant
533 in the telling event. Some Sea Island informants who knew many kinds
538 of tales often included songs and thus encouraged the audience to participate in singing the chorus. Many of those who did not know the words to the chorus participated by clapping their hands, patting their feet, or humming along with those who were singing. The Sea Island tales with songs were far more exciting in eliciting a wide response from the audience than those without songs.

159 Though Miss Deeley is most noted for telling tales of bizarre hap-
538 penings and supernatural events, I found that the children who were left in her care seemed to remember the words and melodies to the songs in the tales much better than they remembered the unusual events (see "The Three Pear[s]"). This woman's vast repertoire of tales, like her knowledge about various medicinal cures, is perhaps a result of her having given birth to thirteen children, twelve of whom are living. She told me that telling them stories helped keep them occupied and out of trouble. In addition, some of the older children used the same tales and techniques to keep the younger ones amused. Now that most of her own children are grown, she continues the storytelling tradition with the grandchildren and great-grandchildren left in her care. Furthermore, while she does indeed believe in modern medicine, she says she
159 finds that most of the ailments that she and her family have suffered
• 791 could be cured or helped by various roots that she found on the islands. The most popular of these is the bloodroot, which when boiled makes a reddish tea and is exceptionally good for high blood pressure. The snakeroot, which must be boiled and permitted to stand or age with good whiskey, is very useful for increasing the appetite and eliminating constipation.

159 Though Miss Deeley would not consent to being recorded, she was
126 patient enough to permit me to take down one story ("The Three
538 Pear[s]") verbatim. This tale represents her language well.

159 *Mr. Jonas Mickell* became a close friend over a period of years, and I am indebted much to him and his wife for the time and effort they took to help contribute to this and other studies. Mr. Mickell is a well-respected man in his community. He traveled much around the islands by boat in his day and thus always had stories to tell of his adventures. He is sixty or more years old and says that he was somewhat "sporty" with the ladies before he was married, some forty years ago, to his

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

159 whether held at Mr. Ted's store or in the clearing under the big Angel
538 Oak tree behind her trailer. As noted before, Miss Myma always told the first tale at a preplanned storytelling, as a way of sanctioning the event. Really not much of a storyteller, she was more relaxed when a group of her "nipping" friends decided to tell "lies" at her house than at gatherings at Mr. Ted's store. The huge Angel Oak, with its ghostly hanging moss, shaded the ground so grass would not grow around it and thus helped to provide a clean, insect-free surface on which to
159 relax. It also served as an anchor for Miss Myma's many respectable
538 and some not-so-respectable friends, a place to sit, smoke, take little
517 nips, and catch the breeze throughout the day. By late afternoon, when her respectable friends had long since gone to return to jobs, see about the children, or attend to chores, her not-so-respectable friends, not having to be responsible to anyone or anything, would settle in and
159 ready themselves to tell lies throughout the night. Miss Myma's sleeping times remain a source of fascination for me. I could never understand how she managed to get up so early and go to bed so late. But then, many of the islanders are night people, roaming the highways, dancing, listening to music, and visiting friends in the dark. There were, however, occasions when Miss Myma actually got up and went to bed, leaving her friends still nipping under the oak.

159 In the winter of 1976 Miss Myma finally agreed to come to Michi-
123 gan to visit me. She would not consent to fly; she would come only if I sent her a Greyhound bus ticket. I sent her the ticket and was delighted that she actually did come, and even more delighted that she would stay for three weeks. It was horribly cold in Michigan that year; Miss Myma did not care to go outside, and cared even less for the nine-degree-below-zero temperature and the mounds of snow. She preferred the warmth and comfort of sitting by the fireplace in our den, smoking her pipe. I was glad that we had a fireplace, and especially happy when
538 she looked into the fire and began to reminisce and tell my two young children tales of Ber Rabbit. She gave them an oral tradition of tales in those three weeks that could not be matched with a lifetime of written
159 literature. They were utterly fascinated by her. She knew my three-
123 year-old daughter well not only because I had taken her with me to visit the Sea Islands but because on one of those occasions my daughter,
• 757 who is asthmatic, had a severe attack around three in the morning. I had used all of her medicine, and there are no drugstores on Wadmalaw Island. Miss Myma observed her labored breathing for a while, and

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

chastised me for not keeping an extra bottle of her medicine with me. Then she got up calmly, took her kerosene lamp, went out in the field behind her house, dug up some kind of root, brought it back, washed it, and boiled it. When the tea from the root had cooled, she took my wheezing daughter into her lap and coaxed her into drinking a cup of the reddish liquid. Twenty minutes later my daughter lay asleep and breathing peacefully on her lap.

In the fall of 1982 Miss Myma's trailer caught fire from her kerosene lamp and burned. Fortunately, she was not injured in the fire. She went to live with a relative whom she had raised as her daughter and who lived only a few doors away. Miss Myma is well into her eighties now. Her daughter told me that her mind wanders from time to time and that she has a tendency to wander off physically from home. In fact, she strayed down to the creek and was lost overnight at one point. A rescue squad was called in, but she was not found until the next morning when a helicopter pilot spotted her sitting out in the open field just beyond the creek banks. She was alert and did not suffer as much as a cold from the dampness and exposure. When I saw her most recently in the spring of 1985, she was sitting under the Angel Oak, a little nip in one hand to warm her blood, a crabbing stick in the other. She was smiling faintly and waving goodbye to me as I headed down the lane. She looked as if she were waiting for just the right moment to slip off down to the creek and nab a crab or catch a mullet "for sho."

Ida Mae is different from most of the women on the Sea Islands, very different. After having five children out of wedlock, and becoming a grandmother four times over by the time she was thirty-nine, she told me she had given up trying to be respectable in that community.

Ida Mae was an attractive woman when I met her in 1973. She had nut brown skin and flashing white teeth accented by a gold tooth that glistened in the sun when she laughed. She had the kind of face that was designed for the close-cut, boyish afro that she kept edged to perfection. Her light hazel eyes—"devil eyes," the islanders called them—were offset by her rich, dark color and gave the appearance of jumping out at you. She liked her eyes and said they were one of the reasons that she had had the gold tooth put in. In fact, when she first got it, she said, she used to practice smiling and turning her head just so the light would touch on her eyes, her tooth, and the large fourteen-karat gold hoop earrings that one of her men friends had given her. She

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

115 God, roots, and life. He was respected in the community and renowned for his knowledge of the Bible and root medicine. He owned a fair amount of land, which he put to good use growing corn, cucumbers, peas, okra, tomatoes, and other vegetables. The only time I ever got to talk with him was late evenings (when the sun "de red for down"), when he would come in from plowing and planting and sit under his big pecan tree to "catch some breeze." On a few occasions his wife, Miss Maime, a small, short-legged, soft-spoken woman, brought his plate out to the pecan tree so that he could eat while he talked to me. His plate had always been set aside and kept warm, and it [262] was indeed tempting, piled high with cowpeas and bone, a good help- [263] ing of corn bread sliced and filled with fresh butter and molasses, [272] onions and tomatoes from the garden, and hot pepper sauce, with penny drink or iced tea served in his own particular glass.

Mr. Hampy was not a lonely man. He had several children and more head of grandchildren than he felt he could keep up with. Mr. Hampy's children who had remained at home had built their houses or set up their trailers so that each shared the communal yard area near his home, as is traditional in Sea Island family communities. Some of his children, including a special daughter, had moved to New York. The [845] daughter was special because she had been born with a caul over her [789] face and was thus thought to have the gift not only to see ghosts, hants, or hags but to be able to know things that other people are not privileged to know. Mr. Hampy himself had been born with a caul, and he 115 was thus able to sympathize with her special sight. In fact, he at- 845 tributed her leaving the island and going to New York in part to her 789 desire for an area where such things as ghosts, hags, and plat-eyes 775 were less prevalent. Because the island roads are densely forested, they are judged natural haunts for the spirits of the dead. Mr. Hampy often amused himself by telling me that if I really wanted to see a ghost, he 115 could show me one any day of the week just after midnight on the road 775 leading to the Presbyterian graveyard. However, we never made that journey after nightfall to see the ghost standing at the entrance to the lane (see Appendix 3).[A]

115 Mr. Hampy told no tales of Ber Rabbit and his witty ways, though he admitted that he knew many of them. His only topics were religious 759 or medicinal. It was from him that I learned many of the Sea Island [538] folk cures. He accompanied me to the wooded area behind his home and pointed out some of the common roots that grow on top of the

A. [For Appendix 3, see Category 775, pp. 158-164--Analyst]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

ground: dog fennel, sea muckle, and mullein, all of which can be dried, boiled, and made into teas to alleviate ailments like colds, stuffy noses, headaches, and nervous conditions. In addition, he pointed out several varieties of the more potent underground roots: white root, known to relieve headaches and cold symptoms; black root, said to be good for nerves and the shakes; snakeroot, excellent for constipation; and the revered bloodroot, said actually to bleed when it is cut and generally accepted even by the younger generations as a cure for such blood disorders as anemia and high and low blood pressures and for various female problems. I was privileged to be offered samples of some of his many medicinal cures, for example, snakeroot boiled and steeped for four months in good whiskey. Though this concoction is bitter and among the worst-tasting of all the herbal cures, it is fairly common on Sea Island shelves. Some say, "If the taste ain't de move whatever de pain you, the whiskey sho will." Mr. Hampy believed that when one took something from nature, like a root, one had to return something back to it. Thus for every root he dug up he left a few cents in the hole, more or less depending on the type of root; only silver money, for example, was left for the bloodroot.

Mr. Hampy's oral style was typical of most Sea Island religious oratory, though, since he was accustomed to public address on Sundays as well as storytelling, his language varied according to the occasion. In telling his religious tales, he would engage his audience's attention with the seriousness of his subject and the dignity of his manner. Unlike Mr. Henry, he seldom stood. He would begin very slowly, explaining that his subject matter could always be substantiated by the Bible (though in some cases, as it turns out, it could not be). In the midst of his sermon or tale, he would often do as Miss Deeley did: stop, look around at each of the listeners' faces, and say, "I ain't believe you know what I ben talk about, do you?" Not expecting a reply, he would continue. The question was to gauge the extent to which he held his audience's attention. Whether he had everyone's attention or not, he, like Mr. Henry, would proceed to talk until I ran out of tape, until it was too dark, or until the mosquitoes became too bad to continue to sit outside.

During one of my recent trips to the Sea Islands, in the summer of 1984, Mr. Hampy died. His doctors said that there was no medical reason why he should have died. According to the islanders, Miss Maime, his wife, had been battling cancer for more than ten years and

41 Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mrs. Janie Hunter

THEY WORKED THEIR OWN REMEDY

159
●157 We doesn't go to no doctor. My daddy used to cook medicine—herbs medicine: seamuckle, pine top, life everlasting, shoemaker root, ground moss, peachtree leaf, big-root, bloodroot, red oak bark, terrywuk.

Now when my children have fever I boil life everlasting; squeeze little lemon juice in it. Once they go to bed it strike that fever right away. That something very good.

And you hear about children have worm? We get something cull jimsey weed. You put it in a cloth and beat it. And when you done beat it, you squeeze the juice out of it, and you put four, five drop of turpentine in it, give children that to drink. You give a dose of castor oil behind 'em. You don't have to take 'em to no doctor.

159
752 If anybody fall down and break bone, my daddy get a towel and pour some water in the basin—put half a bottle of white vinegar in it. He hot the towel and bathe the leg in some mud. Go in the creek and get some mud, band that whole leg up in mud. Couple days you be walking. That knits it right back together.

For a cut, to stop 'em from bleeding, Daddy just get a big spoonful of sugar and throw 'em in there. He say once a cut stop bleeding it's not dangerous. Spider webs grow up in the house and you get that and tie 'em on. (239) Web grow right in there.

If you get sores you get something you call St. John out in the field. And you see those little bump grow on a gum tree; you get them and you burn them two together and just tie 'em right on that wound. That heals right up.

When my little boy got a nail stuck in his feet, I got a basin of hot water with physic salt and let him hold he feet down in that—draw the poison out. Then I tie a piece of butts meat on it. His foot get better.

159
757
825 You hear about some little thing run back in its hole—fiddler crab? We use that for whooping cough. Catch the crab, boil 'em up with something else—I can't 'call the name—and strain 'em through a white cloth. Give that for drink. It'll cure the running whoop.

759 All this from old people time when they hardly been any doctor. People couldn't afford doctor, so they had to have and guess. Those old people dead out now, but they worked their own remedy and their own remedy come out good.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mr. Abraham Jenkins

I'LL GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE OF PEOPLE WHO REALLY MADE A DIFFERENCE IN THESE ISLANDS

554 Sometimes people don't recognize the hard work of people behind the scenes. I'll give you an example of people who really made a difference in these islands. Mrs. Alleen Brewer Wood came to Johns Island in 1929. Her husband, Rev. Brewer, was the pastor of two churches on the island. She was quite a community person. She would help with anything that needed doing. [150] These were the days when people depended on root medicine and midwifery, what I call indirect health care. It was not the approved method of health care, but people had their own methods for taking care of problems. Mrs. Wood was around in that time when we were trying to get people to feel better about themselves, and trying to teach them about self-respect. She was one of the persons that we call the "grandmoms of the islands," instrumental in so many little things that you don't hear that much about. She helped lay down some of the foundation for the projects that came to Johns Island. Later on she taught the Citizenship School classes on Edisto.

554 793 Rev. McKinley Washington was one of those people that my daddy really relied on. He would call him up every Sunday morning before church and talk over with him the things he would like to see discussed in church—voter registration or whatever the issue was. He was just a young minister in those days, right out of school. He started the NAACP here. And later they formed [668] [794] a group from the Presbyterian church called the Self-Development of People to deal with the needs of people on Edisto. They bought an old school building (used to be the school for the white kids) and used it as a community building.

When Esau was working through the Charleston Citizens' Committee, which took in all of the sea islands, Rev. Washington was his connection for Edisto and Yonges islands. People were always reluctant about how fast to [198] move to bring about change. They will go with you for awhile, but then if it looks like you're not giving up, some will want to put the brakes on. So Esau had to have people that would keep that motivation going. And McKinley was one of those people. He's a real good speaker. His voice is deep and heavy, and when he starts preaching, you have to listen to him. So my daddy used him as an inspirator.

When Rev. Willis Goodwin came to Johns Island to pastor in 1966, people just looked on the ministry as church on Sunday. When Rev. Goodwin got here he changed all that. His ministry was seven days per week. He would go around to the people who were sick or were in need—and everybody was in

islands. In the absence of medical people, the islanders have historically maintained and relied on home remedies. Because home remedies were the only form of medicine available these practices have continued, particularly among the elder population who have been more deeply rooted in its use.

To the outsider these practices and medical beliefs may seem absurd. The practices however have gained the attention of trained medical persons who are on the island cataloging these remedies.

At the extreme or the most proficient practioners of the home remedy art are called "Hand Workers." Perhaps the most widely known practitioner of this art was the late Dr. Buzzard of Beaufort County, South Carolina. People from all over the nation come to the islands in search of the Hand practitioners. They come for potions, cures, advice and to have old hands renewed.

A Christian people, these practitioners in no way uphold the sterotypical images commonly portrayed in the litorature. These practitioners generally attribute their skills as holy gifts which through dedicated practice and study, their art has been refined to meet the needs of their patients.

Mentally these practitioners have stored extensive files of illness-cure remedies. These mental files are

759 usually a work accomplished over a seventy-year span. Discarding dsyfunctional potions and retaining those which work, these practitioners claim their greatest skill is that of memory. An oral people, who rely heavily on the remembered word, practitioners claim that they are simply extraordinarily adept in this process. This ability enables them to recall those remedies which were of proven effectiveness in similar cases.

757 It is difficult to accurately gage how effective this practice has been. Nevertheless one measure comes through examining the health habits of islanders. First the islander would try the family remedy for an illness, if this does not work medical doctors are consulted, if the illness persists then the hands practitioners are sought. The continued existence of these practices on the islands suggests that these latter practices are effective.

759 Hand Practitioners - What They Can Do

Practitioners are regarded as having the ability to perform effectively in the following areas:

1. Heal the physically sick.
2. Bring and change the luck element.
3. Change the habits or doings of wayward people.
4. Unite man and woman in pleasant relationships.
5. Protect the body from harm.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

beliefs of the Southern Negroes as a whole. Indeed, they have actually ceased to take seriously many of the old-time superstitions because of the influence which Penn School has had. Undoubtedly there are still some people who patronize "root doctors" or "cunjuh men" in order to procure charms of various sorts and to get "spells" or "voodoo" put on their enemies. There are also some who actually use the folk remedies for various ills, and there are some who plant crops and kill hogs according to lunar phases. But the general status of the island culture as far as superstition is concerned is not very far below the level of the more backward white groups in this country. A surprisingly large proportion of the Negro folk beliefs found in the South is of European descent, and this holds true for the beliefs of the St. Helena Island Negroes.

Following are some of the traditional folk beliefs which seem to be actually practiced to some extent. Midwives, without the patient's knowledge, sometimes put a hoe or plow point or an ax under the bed to cut the after-pains attending child-birth. It is also thought that if the patient will drink tea made from gizzard which has been dried and powdered, or tea made from the nest of the mud dauber, the after-pains will be reduced. Most families try to pay the midwife promptly for her services, for it is believed that failure to pay may cause her eyes, or even her mind, to be affected. Sometimes a Bible or a broom may be seen lying on the pillow above the head of a sick person. This is supposed to prevent the spirits from taking the person away. Mrs. King, the community nurse, stated that she has occasionally had to combat the use of such remedies as cow excreta and vinegar heated for boils,

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

brown pea liquor as a wash for smallpox, a mixture of lard and mocking-bird bush (cassena) as an ointment for smallpox, soot for cuts, and lemon juice and ashes for colds.

One woman reproved a member of the research staff because he threw away two rats which had been killed in a trap. She said that the rats were just the thing she needed for a tea which she wanted to brew for her ten-year-old son to cure him of bed-wetting. The same woman believed that her failure to "bind" the boy—that is, to wrap cloth tightly around his abdomen—while he was a baby had resulted in his being weak physically. Another woman believed that if a stammering child drank water from a bell he would be cured.

Many mothers with babes in arms will call the baby's spirit when they start home after a visit, believing that the spirit might stay behind and evil consequences ensue unless it is called. It is considered bad luck to let a baby be near the coffin at a funeral. If one is present he is passed over the coffin from one person to another in order to prevent his spirit from accompanying the dead. Mr. Wildy, teacher of blacksmithing at Penn School and a member of the quartet, said that on one occasion his infant was taken to a funeral. He had thought nothing of the superstition, but other people at the funeral became very much disturbed on seeing the baby and would give him no peace until he had passed the child across the coffin.

As elsewhere in the South, the St. Helena people put on the grave the things last used by a person. These are usually china, glasses, pitchers, medicine bottles, and other inexpensive things, but sometimes articles of value are left on the graves—antique clocks, vases, and the like.